

ITINERARIUM

THE PIACENZA
PILGRIM

TRANSLATED BY
ANDREW S. JACOBS

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Translated from the edition of P. Geyer in *Itineraria et alia
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PROBABLY ABOUT THE YEAR 570, a man from Piacenza (in northern Italy) made a pilgrimage to the holy land and left a written account in Latin. All we know about the pilgrim comes from the text itself (although sometimes he is mistakenly called “Antoninus” after the otherwise unknown martyr he invokes in the opening paragraph). The text below is translated from the critical edition of P. Geyer in *Itineraria et alia geographica*, Corpus Christianorum series Latina volume 175 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), pp. 129–53.

Update (March 2022): I have added in links to geographic sites at Pleiades, “a community-built gazetteer and graph of ancient places” and links to sources on saints whose holy places the pilgrim visits at the Oxford “Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity” database. Each of these sites will give further information on the place/saint in question.

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Andrew S. Jacobs

Itinerarium

1. Blessed [Antoninus](#) the martyr went before me as I went out from there, from the city of [Piacenza](#), making pilgrimage to those places called “holy places.” We went out from [Constantinople](#) to the island of Cyprus, into the city of [Constantia](#) where Saint Epiphanius rests.¹ It is a beautiful city, delightful, adorned with date palms. We came to the region of Syria, to the island of [Antaradus](#), and from there we came to Syrian [Tripoli](#), where Saint [Leontius](#) rests.² This city was destroyed in the time of Emperor Justinian by an earthquake along with other cities.³ A series of earthquakes devastated the cities of Syria and (modern) Lebanon in the 550s. Next we came to [Byblus](#), which was itself destroyed with its inhabitants, likewise the city of Triaris,⁴ which was also destroyed. Then we came to the most splendid city of [Beirut](#), in which there was recently a university. This city was destroyed; we were told by the bishop of the city that all of the people — with the exception of pilgrims⁵ — who died

¹ Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis [Constantia], circa 315–403.

² Leontius was supposedly martyred under Vespasian in 73.

³ A series of earthquakes devastated the cities of Syria and (modern) Lebanon in the 550s.

⁴ Otherwise unknown, but possibly (based on its name) a military outpost.

⁵ Here, as throughout, *pilgrim* is used to translate *peregrinus*, which also has the more basic meaning of “stranger” or

there were known by name, and numbered at least 30,000. This city lies under the mountains of Lebanon.

2. From Beirut we came to [Sidon](#), which lies partly in ruins and is also next to Lebanon. The people there are the worst. The river Asclepius runs there, and from the spring where it rises stands.... From Sidon we came to [Zarepta](#), which is a modestly sized city with plenty of Christians. The small chamber which was made for Elijah is there, and the very bed on which he lay, and the marble vessel which that widow filled up (1 Kgs 17). Many offerings take place there and many miracles occur there. Going out from Zarepta we came to the city of [Tyre](#). Between Sidon and Tyre and Zarepta you go for about seven miles. The inhabitants of Tyre are forceful, and they live the worst lives, of such unspeakable decadence; they have public weaving factories where women work on silk and all manner of textiles. From there we came to [Ptolemaïs](#). This is an honest city, with good monasteries.

3. From Ptolemaïs across the sea to the Jewish city of [Sycamina](#) is about half a mile as the crow flies, six miles along the sea shore. The Camp of the Samaritans lies about a mile from Sycamina, under Mount Carmel. Half a mile above this camp is the monastery of Saint Elisha, where the woman approached him whose son he revived (2 Kgs 4). On Mount Carmel is found a small, round type of rock

“foreigner”: either or both may be intended by *peregrinus*.

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which echoes when you shake it, even though it is solid. Here's how miraculous this rock is: if it is suspended from any woman or animal,⁶ it guarantees she will not miscarry. And six or seven miles from there is the city of [Porphyreon](#).

4. From Ptolemaïs we left the coast. We came to the border of Galilee into the city which is called [Diocaesarea](#); there we revered what we were told were the jug and breadbasket of Saint Mary.⁷ There's a cathedral at the place where she was sitting when the angel came to her (Luke 1:26–38). Then we went three miles to Cana, where the Lord attended the wedding (John 2), and we reclined on his very couch, where I (unworthy!) inscribed the names of my parents.... Two of the water jugs are [still] there and I filled one of them with wine and I lifted it, full, onto my shoulders and made an offering at the altar and we washed in that same spring for a blessing.

5. Then we came to the city of [Nazareth](#), where many miracles occur. In the synagogue there sits the book in which the Lord used to write his ABCs. In that synagogue there is a bench on which he sat with the other children. This bench may be moved by Christians and lifted up, but Jews are entirely unable to move it, and it doesn't permit

⁶ That is, on a chain or pendant.

⁷ This is ancient Sepphoris, modern Zippori: some time in late antiquity it was identified as the childhood home of Mary.

them to drag it outside. The house of [Saint Mary](#) is a basilica, and frequent blessings come from her clothes. In that city the Jewish women are of such beauty that, in that whole country, no more beautiful Jewish women can be found. They say this: that it is a gift from Saint Mary to them, for they say that she is a relative of theirs. And even though there is little love between Christians and Jews, these women are altogether full of love. This province is like paradise! In wheat and fruits it is like Egypt, although smaller, but it surpasses Egypt in wine and oil and apples. The grain is supernaturally tall, and the stalks stand higher than the people.

6. From Nazareth we came to Mount Tabor, which rises up from the middle of a plain, of living earth, about six miles in circumference, rising about three miles. At the top is a plain of about one mile. There are three basilicas there, where it was said by one of the disciples, “Let us make here three tabernacles” (Matt 17:4); there are various cities all around, which are told of in the books of Kings. From Tabor we came to the Sea of Tiberias,⁸ to the city which used to be called Samaria, but now is known as [Neapolis](#);⁹ there is a well where the Lord sought water from the Samaritan woman (John 4), and a basilica of Saint John was made there. This very well is before the chancel screen of

⁸ Also known as the Sea of Galilee, or Lake Kinneret.

⁹ Modern Nablus.

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the altar and there's a bucket there (they say) which is the very same one from which the Lord drank, and many illnesses are cured there.

7. From there we came to the city of Tiberias, where there are hot baths that are naturally filled with salt, even though the sea water there is fresh. The sea is about 60 miles around. Then we came to [Capernaum](#), and the house of blessed [Peter](#), which is now a basilica. From there we crossed through camps and villages and cities, and we came to two springs, the Jor and the Dan, which join together and are called the Jordan: how very small! It enters into the sea, and crosses the seawater and comes out on the other seashore. Turning back we came to the place where the Jordan leaves the sea. We crossed the Jordan right there. We came to a city which is called [Gedara](#), which is the same as Gibeon. In that area, about three miles from the city, are hot springs called the Baths of Elijah, where lepers are cleansed, and they have their meals there in a hostel at public expense. In the evening hours the baths are filled. Before that basin is a large tank of water; when it has been filled, all the gates are closed and they are sent inside through a small doorway with lights and incense, and they sit in that tank all night. When they have fallen asleep, the one who will be cured sees some vision, and when he recounts it those springs stop flowing for seven days, and at the end of seven days he is cleansed. Now here is where

John of Piacenza died, Thecla's husband.¹⁰ That hot spring called Gedara comes rushing down into the Jordan, and from the Jordan is filled and becomes greater.

8. And when we came down through Galilee along the Jordan, we crossed through many cities which are written about [in the Bible]; we came to the capital city of Galilee, which is called [Scythopolis](#), set up on a mountain, where Saint John performed many miracles. From there we went up through other sites in Samaria and Judea into the city of [Sebaste](#), where the prophet Elisha rests. Coming down through the plains we passed many cities and villages of the Samaritans; and as we passed through their streets, whether it was us or the Jews, they burned away our footprints with chaff—so great is their loathing of both of us. They make this sort of warning to Christians, for some reason, that you can't touch what you are going to buy before you have paid for it; and if you do touch something and don't buy it, there will soon be trouble. A guard is stationed outside each village who makes this warning. You toss your coins into water, since they won't take it from your hand. And they curse you when you enter. Don't spit! If you spit, you cause trouble. Later they purify themselves in water and then they can enter one of their villages or cities.

9. Then we came to the place where the Lord satisfied

¹⁰ Presumably someone the pilgrim knew from his home town, perhaps an earlier pilgrim from Italy.

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5000 people with five loaves of bread (Matt 14:15–21), a broad plain with olive and palm groves. From there we came to the place where our Lord was baptized (Matt 3:13–17). There the children of Israel crossed over; there the sons of the prophets lost their axe-head and from that place Elijah was taken up (Joshua 3–4, 2 Kgs 6:5, 2 Kgs 2). At the foot of that mountain a cloud rises up from the river at the first hour [seven o'clock], and at sunrise it comes over [Jerusalem](#), above the Zion basilica and above the basilica of the Lord's tomb and above the basilica of Saint Mary and Saint Sophia (where the praetorium is, where the Lord was tried). Above these places the dew falls like rain showers, and doctors collect it. All the dishes are prepared with it in the hostels, for many ailments are cured in those places where this dew falls. This is the same dew which is praised in the psalm: "as the dew from Hermon which falls on Mount Zion" (Ps 133:3). In that part of the Jordan there is a spring where Saint John baptized, two miles from the Jordan. In that valley Elijah was discovered, when the crow brought him bread and meats (1 Kgs 17). All around that valley are a great many hermits.

10. There, in the vicinity of the city called [Livias](#), where the two half-tribes of Israel remained before they crossed the Jordan, in that place there are natural springs, which are called Moses'. There too lepers are cleansed. There is a spring of the freshest water, which is drunk as a purgative and heals many ailments, not far from the Dead Sea, where

the Jordan enters into it below Sodom and Gomorrah. On this shore sulphur and bitumen are collected. The lepers lie all day in that sea in the months of July, August, and into the middle of September. In the evening they wash in those Baths of Moses and sometimes, when God wills it, they are cleansed. But even in general they find some relief there. No living thing is found in that sea—no chaff or wood will float on it, and no human can swim in it, but anything which has been cast into it is submerged in its depths. It's about eight miles from the Jordan to the place where Moses left this life, and not far from there to Segor, where there are many hermits. We also saw Absalom's tomb.

11. I observed Epiphany at the Jordan, where so many miracles occur on that night, in that place where the Lord was baptized. An obelisk was erected there, hidden by a screen; in that place, where the water turned back in its channel (Joshua 4), a wooden cross is set in the water and steps go down into the water on both sides, made of marble. Great vigils are held on the eve of Epiphany, with a great many people. At the fourth or fifth cock crow morning services are held. When the morning services have been completed, at dawn the ministers come forth; with the deacons standing by, the bishop goes down into the river and at the very moment that he begins to bless the water, right away the Jordan turns back on itself with a roar and the water stands still until the baptisms are

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accomplished. And all the Alexandrian shipwrights have their staff there on that day, with jars full of spices and balms, and at the very moment when he has blessed the spring, before they have begun to baptize, they pour out all those jars into the river and take from there blessed water and use it to sprinkle water onto their ships before they are put to sea. When the baptisms are completed they all go down into the river for a blessing, dressed in linen and many other types of fabric which they will keep to be buried in. When the baptisms are done, the water returns to its natural place. And the Jordan flows from the Sea of Tiberias to the Dead Sea, where it ends, 130 miles more or less.

12. On that shore of the Jordan is a cave in which there are cells with seven virgins, who were placed there as little girls; and when one of them has died, she is buried in her cell and another cell is carved out and another little girl is sent there so that the number stays constant. And they have people outside who tend to them. With great trepidation we approached to pray there, but didn't see any of their faces. In that place it is said that there is a cloth which was on the Lord's forehead. Above the Jordan, not far off from where the Lord was baptized, is the very big monastery of Saint John, where there are two hostels. On this shore of the Jordan and the other under the mountains are found snakes from which antidotes are concocted.

13. It is about six miles from the Jordan to [Jericho](#). Now

Jericho seems just like paradise to the human eye. The walls are destroyed, but it's a territory set among marvels. The house of Rahab stands, which is a hostel, and the bedroom where she stashed the spies is a chapel of Saint Mary (Joshua 2). The stones that the children of Israel picked up from the Jordan have been set not far from the city of Jericho in a basilica behind the altar (Joshua 4); they're very big. Before the basilica is a plain, the Lord's Field, which the Lord seeded with his own hands, bearing enough to fill three pecks, which is harvested twice a year; it is never seeded, but bears naturally. It is harvested in the month of February and they partake of it until Easter. After it has been harvested it is plowed; and again, when the other harvests are collected and then it is plowed and left alone.

14. The spring of water that Elisha sweetened waters all of Jericho (2 Kgs 2). A refreshing wine comes from there, that is given to fever patients. One-pound dates come from there; I took some of them with me back home so I could give one to Lord Paterius, a patrician. Forty-pound citrons come from there, and the stem of that fruit is two feet long and two inches thick. There is also a vine there; on the day of the Lord's Ascension, basketfuls of its grapes are sold on the Mount of Olives, and on Pentecost wine from it that they sell in full jars.

15. Going out from the city and approaching Jerusalem, not far from the city of Jericho is that tree where

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Zacchaeus climbed up to see the Lord (Luke 19); this tree, enclosed within a chapel, has grown to the outside through the chapel roof, but is now dried up. Leaving through the gate of Jericho, going from East to West, on the left hand side you enter into the ashes of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19). Over this province a dark cloud is always falling, and there is a sulphuric odor. Now people mistakenly think that Lot's wife has diminished in size due to the licking of animals, but it isn't true: she stands at the same height as she was.¹¹

16. As we went up from the hills into Jerusalem, not far from Jerusalem we came to Bahurim, then we turned left toward the communities of the Mount of Olives, into [Bethany](#) to the tomb of Lazarus. Now as we were gazing into those valleys and wandering through the many monasteries, miraculous sites, we saw a multitude of enclosed men and women on the Mount of Olives. And up there on the Mount, from where the Lord ascended it (Acts 1:1-11), we saw many miraculous things, and the cell in which Saint [Pelagia](#) was enclosed and rests now bodily.¹²

¹¹ The pilgrim refers to the pillar of salt into which Lot's wife was transformed (see Gen 19:26). A fourth-century pilgrim, Egeria, claimed it was no longer visible at all.

¹² According to a popular saint's life, Pelagia had once been an actress (and sex worker) before being converted by Bishop Nonnos; after which she called herself Pelagios and lived out her life as a male (eunuch) monk, walled up in a cell outside

On that mountain lie [James](#), Zebedee,¹³ [Cleopas](#), and many saints' bodies.

17. Coming down from the Mount of Olives into the valley of Gethsemane, where the Lord was betrayed (Matt 26), there are the three reclining seats on which he reclined, and we reclined on them for a blessing. And in that valley is a basilica of Saint Mary, where they say her house was, in which also she was taken up from her body. That valley of Gethsemane is also at the place called Jehosaphat. From Gethsemane we ascended to the gate of Jerusalem through many steps. To the right of the gate is an olive grove; there is the fig-tree from which Judas hanged himself (Matt 27:5), the trunk of which still stands protected by rocks. The gate of the city, which is attached to the Beautiful Gate which was the Temple's, still stands with its threshold and entablature.

18. Having laid down and kissed the earth, we entered into the holy city, in which we venerated the Lord's tomb. The Tomb has been cut out of living rock, that is to say, drawn out of the rock itself. Where the body of the Lord Jesus Christ was set there is a bronze lantern, which is placed where his head once was; it burns there night and

Jerusalem, her true sex discovered upon her death.

¹³ Another version of the text says "James, son of Zebedee" (*Iacobus Zebedaei*) which would make more sense here as there is no other evidence for James's father being venerated as a saint.

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day, and we drew blessings from it and repositioned it. Earth from the outside has been brought into the tomb and those who enter in take some out as a blessing. The stone with which the tomb was enclosed is before the mouth of the tomb, but of the same color as the rock, since it was cut from the rock of Golgotha. Now this stone is decorated with gold and jewels, and the rock of the tomb is like a millstone. There are a lot of decorations: hanging from iron rods there are armbands, bracelets, necklaces, rings, headbands, circular girdles, belts, imperial crowns of gold and jewels decorated with signs of an empress. That tomb is covered as if by a silver cone under golden rays. Before the tomb is set an altar.

19. From the tomb to Golgotha there are 80 steps. From one part the ascent is made along the steps which our Lord climbed up to his crucifixion. There is also the place where he was crucified, and the stain of blood remains there on the very rock. To the side there is the altar where Abraham was going to offer up Isaac (Gen 22), and where Melchizedek made his sacrifice (Gen 14:18). On that altar is a crack: when you put your ear on it you hear the sound of running water. If you toss an apple onto it, or anything which will float, and you go to the spring of Siloam you will see it there. Between Siloam and Golgotha I think there is about a mile. Jerusalem has no water source apart from the Siloam spring.

20. From Golgotha to the site where the cross was

discovered is about fifty steps, into the basilica of Constantine, which is attached to the tomb and Golgotha. In the courtyard of this basilica there is a chamber, where the wood of the cross is kept, which we revered and kissed. There is also the *titulus*, which was positioned over the Lord's head, on which was written: *Here is the King of the Jews*. I saw it and I held it in my hand and I kissed it. The cross is made of nut-wood. As the holy cross is brought forth to be revered, from its chamber into the courtyard where it is revered, at that very hour a star appears in the sky and comes over the site where the cross rests, and while the cross is revered, it stands above it and oil is offered for blessing in small flasks. At the time when the mouth of one of the small flasks touches the wood of the cross, immediately the oil bubbles up out of it, and if it is not closed quickly all of it spills out. As the cross goes back to its own place, so too the star goes back; after the cross is shut away the star is no longer visible. There are also the sponge and the reed, about which we read in the Gospel (Matt 27:48); we drank water from this sponge. There is also the onyx cup which he blessed at the [last] supper, and many other wonders: an image of blessed Mary on a high place and her girdle, and her headband. There are also seven thrones of marble of the elders.

21. We climbed up into David's Tower, where he sang the psalms—very big!—in which there are now monasteries in individual dining rooms. This tower is a square, hollowed

out, and has no roof; Christians climb up in it to lodge there for devotional purposes. Around the middle of the night, they hear rising voices murmuring down in the Valley of Jehosaphat towards the Jordan, in the places facing towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and this valley is commonly called Jehosaphat, which is also Gethsemane.

22. Then we came to the basilica of Holy Zion, where there are many miraculous things, among which is the cornerstone about which it is written that it was rejected by the builders (Matt 21:42). As Lord Jesus entered into this church, which was the house of [Saint James](#), he found that misshaped stone lying around, he picked it up and he placed it in the corner. When you hold it and lift it in your hands and put your ear into that corner it makes a sound in your ears like the murmuring of a multitude of people. In that church there is a column, where the Lord was whipped. That column has a great mark on it: while he clasped it, his chest inhered in that marble and both of his hands and his fingers and palms appear in that rock, such that measurements can be drawn out for all manner of ailments from it, and they wear them around their necks and they are healed.¹⁴ On that column there is a horn, from which the kings, including David, were anointed. There is

¹⁴ The pilgrim refers to the custom of measuring relics and “wearing” the measurements (that is, cloth or rope of the same length) as amulets or talismans.

in that church also the crown of thorns with which the Lord was crowned (Matt 27:29), and the lance with which the Lord's side was pierced (John 19:34). There are many stones, with which [Stephen](#) was stoned (Acts 7). There is also the small column on which the cross of blessed Peter was set, on which he was crucified in Rome. There is the chalice of the apostles, with which they made communion after the Lord's resurrection, and many other marvelous items which I can't recall. There is a monastery of women. I saw a human head enclosed in a golden casket adorned with jewels, which they say is that of the holy martyr [Theodota](#),¹⁵ from which many people drink for a blessing; so I drank, also.

23. From Zion we came to the basilica of Saint Mary, where there is a considerable congregation of monks and there are also hostels for men and women. They receive pilgrims with innumerable tables, and more than 3000 beds for the sick. We prayed in the praetorium where the Lord was tried, where there is the small basilica of Saint Sophia before the ruins of Solomon, beneath the streets which go down to the fountain of Siloam outside Solomon's porch. In that basilica there is the seat where Pilate sat when he tried the Lord. Moreover the four-cornered stone is there, on which he was standing in the middle of the praetorium.

¹⁵ There were several martyrs named Theodota venerated in the sixth century.

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The criminal being tried was raised up on this stone, so that all the people could see and hear him; the Lord was raised up on it when he was tried by Pilate, and his footprints remain on it. He had a pretty foot, small, delicate, and he was of a regular height, with a handsome appearance, curly hair, a shapely hand with long fingers; he is depicted in an image which was made of him while he was still living and is set in that same prætorium. From that rock, where he stood, many miracles are performed; a measure is taken from his footprints, and people wear them for various ailments and are cured. That stone is also decorated with gold and silver.

24. From there we came to an arch, where there was an ancient gate of the city. In that place are the putrid waters where Jeremiah was sent (Jer 38:6). From that arch you go down many steps to Siloam; above Siloam there is a rotating basilica, below which Siloam rises. Siloam has two manufactured basins of marble, and between each basin is an enclosure of screens. In one the men bathe and in the other the women, for a blessing; in these waters many miracles are seen, and lepers are cleansed. Before the courtyard is a great manufactured pool, in which people are continually washing: into those basins, at specific times, that fountain sends forth a lot of water, which goes through the valley of Gethsemane, which is called Jehosaphat, until the Jordan River, and it enters into the Jordan there where the Jordan leaves the Dead Sea below

Sodom and Gomorrah.

25. Now the Siloam fountain itself is enclosed within the city, since the Empress Eudoxia herself added walls to the city.¹⁶ She also fortified the basilica and the grave of Saint Stephen, and her own tomb is next to the tomb of Saint Stephen. There are about 20 steps between the two graves. Also, [Saint Stephen](#) himself rests outside the gate, a single bowshot to the road which faces West, which goes down to Joppa and Caesarea of Palestine and the city of [Diospolis](#) which in ancient times was called [Azotus](#), where the martyr [George](#) rests.¹⁷ On that roadway, not very far off from that city, stands a marble column in the middle of the road, to which the Lord was first led to be whipped; it fled away by being lifted up by a cloud and set down in this place. And this is known to be true, insofar as it has no base on which it ought to be grounded, but it stands above the ground and is moved around. An iron cross has been set on top of it and it is climbed on stairs and there are lights there and incense. Demoniacs are cleansed there, for in that province the blessed George shows many miracles.

26. As we went out from Siloam we can into the field that was purchased for the price of the Lord, which is called

¹⁶ Eudoxia (or Eudocia, circa 400-461) was the wife of Emperor Theodosius II. She spent the last 20 years of her life living in the holy land.

¹⁷ George was a military saint, martyred under Diocletian in 303.

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Aceldama, that is, “Field of Blood” (Matt 27:8), in which they bury pilgrims. There are cells of the servants of God among those graves, many virtuous men, and apples and vines throughout the area of those tombs.

27. As we returned to the city we came to bathing pools that have five porches, one of which has the basilica of Saint Mary, in which many miracles occur. That pool in its present form is filthy, and all the city's unmentionables are washed there. We saw in one shadowy corner an iron chain, with which the unhappy Judas hanged himself (Matt 27:5). Going out of there once more to the greater gate we came to Saint [Hesychius](#), where he rests bodily;¹⁸ bread is distributed to the poor people and pilgrims, as Helena ordained.

28. On the road that leads to Bethlehem, three miles from Jerusalem, Rachel rests bodily, on the outskirts of Rama. There, in the middle of the road, I saw standing water coming out of a rock, to be taken at one's discretion up to seven pints; everyone takes their fill and it never diminishes nor becomes more full. It is of an indescribable sweetness to drink; they say that, when Saint Mary was fleeing to Egypt, she sat on this spot and became thirsty, and so this

¹⁸ There are several saints Hesychius, including a prominent fourth-century Palestinian monk and one or two military martyr-saints.

water came forth. A small church was built there.

29. From there it's another three miles to [Bethlehem](#).

Bethlehem is a most impressive place: many servants of God; the cave where the Lord was born, in which there is the manger itself, decorated with gold and silver; lamps within burning night and day. But the mouth of that cave is altogether narrow at the entrance. Jerome, the priest, carved out that rock at that mouth of the cave and made a grave for himself, where he is buried.¹⁹ As you go on a half mile from Bethlehem, outside the city David rests bodily, along with his son Solomon: two tombs. The basilica is called Saint David's. Also [the children whom Herod slaughtered](#) have a tomb in that place (Matt 2:16), and they all are at rest in one tomb: it is opened up and their bones are visible. Before Bethlehem there is a monastery surrounded by a wall, in which a multitude of monks are gathered.

30. From Bethlehem to the Oak of Mamre it is 24 miles: there Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Sarah rest, and also Joseph's bones. A basilica was built, with four porches, with an open courtyard in the middle. Through the middle runs a screen, and on one side Christians come in and out of the

¹⁹ Jerome (347-420) founded a monastic community with his friend and patron Paula in the 380s, after they emigrated from Rome. Here he executed his famous Latin translation of the Bible (eventually called the Vulgate).

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other side Jews, burning lots of incense. For the deposition of Jacob and David is celebrated most reverently in that country on the day after the Lord's birthday: Jews come together from that whole country, a vast multitude, and they offer a lot of incense and they bring lamps and gifts to the ministers there.

31. As we were coming back to Jerusalem, and coming down on the road which goes to Gaza and Ashkelon, we kept on for 20 miles from Jerusalem and we came to Mount Gilboa, where David slaughtered Goliath (1 Sam 17). There Saul and Jonathan died (1 Sam 31-2 Sam 1). There also Goliath rests in the middle of the road, a wooden heap at his head. The pile of rocks forms a high hill, such that there is no movable stone for 20 miles since it is a holy custom that whenever anybody passes by, they pick up three stones and throw them at that mound. It never rains in those hills, and there is a mystery in the night-time hours: they see unclean spirits moving around; according to eyewitnesses, they are like fleecy clouds of wool, or perhaps sea waves.

32. Then, turning to the side, we came to the city called [Eleutheropolis](#): there Samson slaughtered many men with the jawbone of an ass (Judg 15), and a fountain came forth from it: this fountain waters that area to the present day. We were at the place where it rises up. Then we came to the place where Zechariah was killed and he rests there bodily (2 Chr 24); there is a beautifully decorated basilica

and many servants of God. From there we came to the place where Isaiah was sawn apart,²⁰ and where he rests; the saw was put in Saint Zechariah's as a memorial. From there we came to the place where Habakkuk carried the refreshments to the harvesters (Bel 1). And there rises the spring where Philip baptized the eunuch (Acts 8). In those places there are the wells that Abraham and Isaac dug: that is, the Well of the Oath and the Well of Calumny (Gen 26:21–22).

33. We came into [Ashkelon](#). There is the Well of Peace on the main cross-street, made into the shape of a theater. You go down the water on steps. There rest the three brother-martyrs of Egypt; they have their own names, but they are commonly called "the Egyptians." A mile from there is the city of Sarafia, and the city of Maiuma in the vicinity of Ashkelon. From there we came to the city of [Maiuma](#) of Gaza, where rests the martyr Saint [Victor](#).²¹ From Maiuma it is one mile to Gaza. [Gaza](#) is a splendid and delightful city, with the most honest inhabitants of an entirely fitting generosity, great lovers of pilgrims. Two miles from Gaza rests the Holy Father [Hilarion](#).²²

²⁰ Late antique Jewish and Christian texts, such as the *Ascension of Isaiah* describe the prophet's gruesome death sawn in half in a tree by Menasseh.

²¹ Many Saints Victor were venerated in late antiquity.

²² Hilarion, a fourth-century hermit, was considered the

34. From there we came to the city of [Elusa](#), which is at the foot of the desert that goes to Sinai; there we heard from the bishop the story of a certain noble young woman named Mary. When she was married, on the very night of her wedding her spouse died. She bore this patiently, and within seven days she had set free all of his household.... [she] distributed [his property] to the poor people and monasteries. In observance she remained indoors until the seventh day; that night, her husband's coat now missing, she could not be found. It is said that she wanders in the Transjordanian desert, among the reeds and the palm-trees, on the borders of Segor around the Dead Sea. In those places we found a monastery of young women, more than sixteen or seventeen of them in the desert, cared for by Christians. They had a single ass who worked for them, and they cared for a lion domesticated since it was a cub, huge and terrible to look at; as we approached their cells, its roar was such that all the animals we had with us pissed, and some of them fell to the ground. They said that this lion shepherded the ass to pasture. Through me,²³ that most Christian companion of mine offered 100 *solidi* to them, but they didn't accept. He sent off to Jerusalem and had

founder of Palestinian eremitic monasticism. A rival tradition held that Hilarion was entombed on Cyprus, where he died.

²³ Here is our only hint that the pilgrim speaks another language (likely Greek) since he acts as a translator for another member of his group.

brought in thirty shirts and vegetables for their cellars and oil and lamps, but they just told us about the virtue of Mary, wandering off in the desert. For two days my companion kept up his vague bargaining: whether or not he was successful, he wouldn't tell us. Shirts, dates, baskets of roasted chick peas he took to them, and lupine,²⁴ and he didn't bring any of it back. We were unable to console his grief and moaning, he just kept saying: "Woe is me! Why bother to say I'm a Christian?"

35. Moving off from the city of Elusa, we entered the desert. Twenty miles on there is a camp, where the hostel of Saint George is found, where they have something like shelter for travelers and supplies for hermits. From there we entered into the deep desert, and we came to places about which it is said: "Earth into wasteland for the wickedness of its inhabitants" (Ps 107:34). We saw a few people with camels, running away from us (and we also saw them in Jerusalem), people from Ethiopian parts, with pierced nostrils and pierced ears, small shoes on their feet and rings on their toes. We asked them about it, and they said: "The Roman Emperor Trajan granted this to us as our mark."

36. As we wandered through the desert for five or six days, with camels carrying our water, and we took a pint in the morning and a pint in the evening per person. When

²⁴ A high-protein legume.

the bottled water became bitter, like gall, we put some sand in it and it became sweet again. Saracen households and their wives came out of the desert, sitting on the side of the road and mourning; a silk cloth laid out before they asked for bread from passers-by, and their men came, too. They brought out cold bottled water from the deep desert and they gave it out and accepted bread in return. They brought out garlic and roots, whose scent was sweeter than any other smell, and they took nothing. It was forbidden to them because they were celebrating their festival days. The population that moved through that greater desert numbered 12,600.²⁵

37. Moving through the desert, on the eighth day we came to the place where Moses drew water from the rock (Exod 17; Num 20). From there, on the next day, we came to Horeb, the Mountain of God, and moving off from there we climbed Mount Sinai. We saw a multitude of monks with innumerable hermits, singing songs about the cross. They greeted us, and paid reverence to us prostrate on the ground: we did likewise, weeping. They escorted us into the valley between Horeb and Sinai; there is a spring at the foot of the mountain, where Moses saw the sign of the burning bush (Exod 3); from this spring he watered his flocks. This spring is enclosed inside a monastery; the

²⁵ “Saracen” here, as throughout classical and postclassical literature, is a blanket term for eastern “barbarians.”

monastery is surrounded by protective walls. It has three abbots, learned in languages—Latin and Greek, Syriac and Coptic and Bessan²⁶—and many interpreters of various languages. There are monastic storehouses in there. We climbed the mountain, three miles straight up, and we came to the cave where Elijah was hidden when he fled before Jezebel (1 Kgs 19). Before this cave a spring rises up, which waters the mountain. From there we climbed three more miles on to the utmost peak of the mountain, where there is a small chapel, no more than six feet square. No one attempts to stay the night there, but at sunset the monks climb up and perform the daily office. In that place everyone makes a devotional act by clipping his beard and hair, and casting it off; so I also clipped my beard.

38. Mount Sinai is rocky, and has little soil. Many cells of God's servants are all around, and likewise on Horeb. They say that Horeb has proper soil. On part of that mountain the Saracens have placed their marble idol, as bright as snow. Their priest resides there, too, clothed in dalmatic and a linen cape. When the time comes for their festivity on the new moon, before the moon comes out, on the festal day that marble begins to change color: as soon as the moon has come out, when they begin to worship, that

²⁶ “Bessan” might be related to the Bessi, a Thracian tribe related (perhaps) to later Slavs; what they are doing in Egypt is unclear. It has also been argued that Bessan refers to an Arabic dialect.

marble has become as black as pitch. When the time for the festivity has come to an end, it has returned to its original color: we all marveled greatly at this.

39. Between Sinai and Horeb there is a valley, in which, at certain times, a dew falls from the sky, which is called “manna” and it congeals and it becomes like cakes of gum; it is collected and they have jars full of it in the monastery: they give out little flasks of it as a blessing. They also drink it like a spiced wine, and they gave us some of it to drink. On those mountains the lion and panther and onagers and gazelles (which are goats) and mules graze on those mountains, and they all pasture together; none of them is wounded by the lion, on account of the barrenness of the desert. Since the time of the Saracen festal days had been completed, a messenger went forth; since it was unbearable to return through the desert the way we had come into, some returned to the holy city through Egypt, others through Arabia.

40. From Mount Sinai to Arabia, and to the city called [Abila](#), there are eight lodging-posts. Ships from India dock in Abila, with various spices. It seemed fitting to us to return through Egypt; we came to the city of [Pharan](#), where Moses battled with Amalek. There is a chapel there, whose altar is placed above those stones which supported Moses as he prayed. On that spot there is a city fortified by walls on its sides, a very lifeless place, apart from water and palm trees. In that city there is a bishop. Women came

forth with their children, carrying palm fronds in their hands and flasks with radish oil; falling to our feet, they anointed our soles and our heads, singing antiphonal songs in their Egyptian language: “May you be blessed by the Lord, may your arrival be blessed, Hosanna on high!” This is the land of Midian; those who dwell in that city are said to be descendants of the household of Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law. There are 800 military guards in public service there, with their wives, who receive the supplies and clothing from the Egyptian populace: they do no manual labor, since there is no place for it, since it is all sand; but every day they take each of their Saracen horses, which receive straw for fodder and barley from the public stores, and they go around with them through the desert in order to guard the monasteries and the hermitages against the incursions of Saracens. But they do not shake in fear before the Saracens! When they go out from that city they lock up and take the keys with them. And those who are within do likewise, against the incursions of the Saracens, since they have no place to go outside, apart from the sky and the sand.

41. From there we came to Succoth and from there we went down to [Migdol](#), and also to the place of 72 palms and twelve springs (Exod 15:27), where we relaxed for two days, refreshed after so much toil and the wasteland of the desert. There is a small camp in that place, which is called Surandela; there is nothing in it except for a church with a

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priest and two hostels for passers-by. In that place I saw a pepper tree and I collected some of it. From there we came to the place where the children of Israel pitched a camp after crossed the sea. There was another small camp there, with a hostel inside. From there we came to the place on the shore where the children of Israel crossed over. At the place where they came out of the sea there is a chapel of Elijah, and as you go on the place where they entered into the sea, there is a chapel of Moses. There is a small city there, which is called [Clysmā](#), where also the ships come in from India. At that spot in the sea where they cross over, a gulf comes out of the larger sea and extends inland for many miles, and it has deep flood tides. When the sea recedes, there is the whole expected shape: the weapons of Pharaoh and the tracks of the wheels of chariots appear. But all of the weapons have turned into marble. There we received our fill of green nuts, which come from India, which people believe to be from paradise. They are of such grace that whoever has eaten of them is sated.

42. Eleven miles into the sea there is a small island, of living rock; soft fingers hang from it, like flesh fingers of date trees. Ointment pours from them, which they call rocky oil, which is taken away for a great blessing. If you take a vessel there and it has been filled and you want to come back to take more, it won't take or hold the ointment. Whoever is sick, especially demoniacs, if they are able to reach that place they are all cured. When you

take some as a blessing they don't allow you to go through Clysma with it pure, but they mix it with oil. I suppose that if it weren't diluted that the miracle would always be in effect, for the liquid of this ointment keeps going for two miles. It has a sulfuric smell. Whatever storm might be on the sea, within that liquid it stands still as if in stagnant water. In that city of Clysma, inside the basilica, we saw more than eighteen wooden coffins of holy desert fathers.

43. From there we came through the desert to the cave of Paul, which in Syriac is called Quba, whose spring gives water still today.²⁷ From there again we came through the desert to the cataracts of the Nile. There the water rises up to a sign, a warning device crafted by human hands, with twelve steps on it. In the area of the cataracts on both sides of the Nile there are two cities, which they say were constructed by the daughters of Lot, one of which is called Babylonia. Coming through the plains of Tanis we came to the city of [Memphis](#) and Antinoös, where Pharaoh resided, and from which the children of Israel went out. In those places there are the twelve granaries of Joseph, full.

44. In Memphis there was a temple, which is today a church, which had a hallway that shut itself before our Lord, when he was there with the blessed Mary, and even today it cannot be opened. There we also saw a linen cloak, in which is an image of the Savior; they say that, one time,

²⁷ This Paul was a legendary hermit, the teacher of Saint Antony.

he wiped his face off onto it and his image remained on it, which has been revered in every age. We also revered it, but because of its brilliance we couldn't look directly at it: as soon as you look at it, it changes before your eyes.

45. Going down through Egypt we came into the city of Athlef, and we wandered around until Saint [Menas](#), who performs many miracles there.²⁸ From there, by ship through still waters, we came to [Alexandria](#). In that still water we saw many crocodiles. Alexandria is a splendid city, with the shiftiest population, but they love pilgrims. Lots of heresies there. There Saint [Athanasius](#) rests, and Saint [Faustus](#), Saint [Epimachius](#), Saint [Antoninus](#), Saint [Mark](#) and many other bodies of saints.²⁹

46. We came once more into Jerusalem, where I remained for a long time because I was sick. Clearly, with the eyes of faith, I saw blessed [Euphemia](#) in a vision and blessed

²⁸ The Egyptian shrine of Saint Menas (d. circa 303) was one of the most popular in late antiquity.

²⁹ Athanasius (circa 300–373) was a prominent bishop of Alexandria; Faustus was a common name for saints and martyrs, including several who supposedly died in Egypt; there is a martyrology of an Egyptian Epimachus, who may be intended here; Antoninus is another very common name for a saint (perhaps the patron saint of the pilgrim, mentioned in the opening line?); and Saint Mark refers to the evangelist.

Antony;³⁰ when they came, they healed me. Going out from Jerusalem I went down to Joppa. There Saint [Tabitha](#) rests, who is also called Dorcas (Acts 9:36–39). Then I came to [Caesarea Philippi](#), which is also called Strato’s Tower and Caesarea of Palestine. There rest Saint [Pamphilus](#), Saint [Procopius](#), Saint [Cornelius](#), from whose bed we took a blessing.³¹ Pamphilus was a priest in Caesarea who was martyred in 309 under Maximin Daia; Procopius was martyred in 303 or 304 in Palestine, under Diocletian; Cornelius is the Roman centurion of Acts 10–11. From there we went up through Galilee and we came to [Damascus](#). There is a monastery at the second mile-marker, where Saint [Paul](#) was converted (Acts 9), and the street called Straight, in which many miracles occur. Then we came to [Heliopolis](#), and from where we came to [Emesa](#), where the head of Saint [John the Baptist](#) is, which was put in a glass jar; we looked inside that jar with our own eyes, and we venerated it. From there we passed through cities: [Larissa](#), Aristosa, and [Epiphaneia](#), and we came into the most splendid city of [Apamea](#), which has all

³⁰ Euphemia (d. circa 303) was a virgin martyred at Chalcedon under Diocletian; this Antony may refer to the monk, or perhaps the Antoninus of the previous chapter.

³¹ Pamphilus was a priest in Caesarea who was martyred in 309 under Maximin Daia; Procopius was martyred in 303 or 304 in Palestine, under Diocletian; Cornelius is the Roman centurion of Acts 10–11.

the nobility of the Syrians.

47. Going out from Apamea we came to greater [Antioch](#), where Saint [Babylas](#) rests and the [Three Children](#), Saint [Justina](#) and [Saint Julian](#) and the [Maccabean brothers](#),³² that is, nine graves, and above each grave hangs the instruments of their torment. From there we went down into Mesopotamia, into the city of [Chalcis](#). From there we came to [Harran](#), where Abraham was born, and going down from there we came to the city of [Barbalissus](#), where [Saint Bacchus](#) rests, the brother of Saint Sergius.³³ Then we came to the city of [Suras](#); through the middle of the city courses the River Euphrates, which is spanned by a bridge there. There Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus suffered [martyrdom]. Twelve miles into the desert, among the Saracens, rests Saint [Sergius](#), in the city of [Tetrapyrgium](#).³⁴

³² Babylas, a bishop of Antioch, was martyred circa 250, along with three “spiritual children”; Justina and Julian were martyred in the fourth century under Diocletian; the Maccabean brothers are biblical martyrs.

³³ Saints Sergius and Bacchus were martyred together under Diocletian in 303.

³⁴ The text ends here, although presumably the pilgrim narrated his return home, or at least his arrival at some place where he putatively recorded his travels.